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EXTRA-MARITAL "AFFAIRS"

by GORDON H. CUMMING

Extra-Marital "affairs" represent a common and serious threat to the marriage relationship. In light of this it is astonishing that so little study has been done in this area. Almost every writer who deals with marriage and the family expresses an opinion regarding these episodes, but a search of the literature reveals almost no published research analyzing the causes. Most writers talk of the deficiencies of the marital relationship: the husband's neglect of the wife in favor of business, or the wife's failure to meet the basic needs of her husband. These factors are undoubtedly of importance. However, another hypothesis suggests itself: the possible existence of serious inadequacies in the personality structure of the partner involved in an affair. The voluminous files of the American Institute of Family Relations were made available for the purpose of testing this hypothesis.

The original sample for this study consisted of over 250 case histories drawn from the total caseload for 1955-1958 in which the central problem was designated as "other man," "other woman," or "promiscuity." After discarding those cases which lacked sufficient detail for the study the sample was reduced to 100 cases. These cases represented the work of 35 counselors, although the majority of the cases had been handled by 10 counselors. These counselors were seen in one-hour interviews built around 15 standard questions. These served to supplement the material found in the case histories.

As an operational definition an affair was defined as "the involvement of one marriage partner in a relationship with a person of the opposite sex, not the spouse, lasting over a period of at least four months. This relationship must involve a degree of emotional entanglement and dependency usually expected to occur between marriage partners. It may or may not involve a desire on the part of one or both parties to marry. Sexual intercourse is not a required element of the relationship although it is expected that some physical expression of affection will be present. (This may be simply a kiss or the holding of hands.)"

As a fact, sexual intercourse occurred in only two-thirds of the cases, as far as could be determined.

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Why do people become involved in an extra-marital affair? Poor sexual adjustment with the marital partner was the most popular reason given, but it was cited by less than one-fourth of the subjects, husbands being twice as likely to give this reason as were wives. "Love" was given as the motivation by the largest number (22%) of the women though, of course, the word was not defined! Next in order of frequency among reasons given by both sexes were; "Marriage never good," "Mate not affectionate." and "Enjoyed other person's company." A few alleged sympathy for the other person while two wives were seeking "revenge" for their husband's behavior. One in eight could assign no reason.

Almost one-half of the affairs were revealed by the involved spouse, usually with a declaration of love for the third party and a request for divorce. A reading of the case histories reveals that many of the self-confessing partners were not nearly as anxious for divorce and remarriage as they claimed to be—the revelation seems to have been intended primarily to injure the mate.

What was the result of counseling in these 100 cases? In 55% the couple are still married and their previous relationship improved. Divorce occurred in 14%, separation in another 9%. In the remainder the outcome was uncertain or unknown. This improvement of the relationship in 55% of the cases is more than double that reported by the National Marriage Guidance Council of Great Britain, where only 24½% of the cases showed improvement. This was the only large series of cases available for comparison.

All of the husbands and wives counseled were given the Johnson Temperament Analysis—a routine procedure at the AIFR. It measures nine traits: nervous, depressive, active, cordial, sympathetic, subjective, aggressive, critical, and self-mastery. Women involved in affairs revealed personalities which were more deviate from the norm than those of the men. In general, persons involved in such affairs tended to score high on the active, cordial, sympathetic, and aggressive scales.

The JTA is primarily a measurement of normal aspects of personality. In some instances, especially where the counselor believes the personality may be far out of line, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory is also given. This is one of the most widely used tests inventorying pathological aspects of the individual's make-up, and had been administered to 27 of the persons involved in these affairs—12 wives and 15 husbands. Because of the small number of cases no attempt was made to draw sweeping generalizations. The total profile of the subjects' scores, however, did indicate an abnormal personality pattern. Four scales displayed special significance: depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, and especially psychopathic deviate. The last-named scale may well be worthy of further study as a diagnostic

measure for the affair-prone personality.

In any group of persons there will naturally be found some with abnormal personalities ,but the percentage of this group which was classified as abnormal was four to five times greater than the percentage of Northwestern University students measured by the same standard.

Despite the obvious shortcoming of such a limited study as this, it appears the original hypothesis is verified, namely, that husbands and wives who become involved in extra-marital affairs display discernible personality traits which are different than those of non-involved persons. These differences are in the general direction of inferiority or abnormality as measured by the standards of the tests used.

(Abstract of unpublished Master's thesis in sociology, University of Southern California, January, 1961.)

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Notes from the AIFR

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL workshop in marriage and family counseling will be held at the Institute's headquarters, July 31-Aug. 12 inclusive. Collaborating with the Institute are two accredited institutions of higher education: Chapman College, Orange, Calif., which offers qualified participants two units in sociology in its graduate department, and Pepperdine College, Los Angeles, Calif., the graduate department of which similarly offers three units in psychology. The intensive sessions of the workshop focus on the practical aspects of counseling, the "how to" of dealing with the varied problems brought to the professional person who is called upon to help people in difficulty. It has been found invaluable by clergymen, teachers, physicians, attorneys, youth group leaders, social workers, executives of community organizations, and others who have the opportunity, often the necessity, to help people in trouble. Mornings will be, as in the past, devoted to brief lectures and discussions, while the afternoons will be taken up by intensive work in laboratory groups, open forums, and group counseling. Full information may be had from the registrar, Mrs. Leslie F. Kimmell, American Institute of Family Relations, 5287 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 27, Calif. Early registration is urged, because of limited facilities.

MOTHER'S STUDY GROUP meets at the Institute office each Tuesday afternoon at 1:30, as part of the work of the Family Department under the direction of Mrs. Ruth B. Michaelson. Mothers taking part are able to bring their children without extra cost, and leave them in charge of some of the counselors who observe them in play situations and give their findings and recommendations to the mothers.

CLASSES in preparation for childbirth are now held not merely at the Institute's office, but at five other locations in the Los Angeles area, in order to make them more accessible to expectant mothers. Any such woman who has her physician's permission may enroll. Classes for training teachers of this subject, which is growing so rapidly in popularity all over the civilized world, are also offered by Dr. Mary Jane Hungerford, assistant director of the department of education of the AIFR.

YOUTHFUL MARRIAGES TODAY

If youthful marriages are defined as those in which at least one partner is under the age of 19, their number is greater than in the pre-World War II period, but has not increased very much during the past 10 years. The number of high school girls who are married is not really very large—only one or two out of each hundred.

This is the finding of various small samples in different parts of the U.S., made by different investigators and summarized by sociologist Lee Burchinal in a valuable overview of the scattered publications on the subject.

Many of the high school marriages follow an unexpected pregnancy: the rate ranges from 31% to 56% for all school age marriages and to 87% in Iowa for couples in which both partners were high school students. Dr. Burchinal summarizes a wide variety of data as showing that:

1. Youthful marriages predominantly involve young girls and their slightly older husbands.

2. Girls who marry while still in school are generally in their junior or senior grades.

3. Between approximately one-third and one-half of all young marriages involve premarital pregnancies.

4. Premarital pregnancies are highest among couples in which both parties are still of school age and probably are lower in which one or both parties have graduated from high school.

5. Young marriages are not elopements, but reflect the characteristics of conventional weddings. (i.e., they are in the girl's home town, parents are present, a clergyman officiates, even though the marriage has been forced by pregnancy.)

6. And young marriages disproportionately involve persons with lower or working class backgrounds.

These are not unexpected findings, but it is highly desirable to have the evidence in full made available, and Dr. Burchinal's review is by far the most valuable contribution yet made for this purpose. It is published in the *Family Life Coordinator* (by the Oregon Coordinating Council on Social Hygiene and Family Life, Eugene Ore., IX:1-2, Sept.-Dec. 1960.)

Since these high school marriages have been a serious problem for school administrators, many studies have inquired how the married students are treated. There is much confusion among educators, both in point of view and in practice. Most schools now allow the students to finish high school, except that if the girl is pregnant she is excluded or pressured to withdraw in about one-half of all cases.

How do these youthful marriages turn out? Data from various sources support the generalization that they are less satisfactory to the participants and less stable than marriages contracted by persons who are out of their teens. "It is easy, however," says Dr. Burchinal (associate professor, dept. of economics and sociology, Iowa State University) "to over-generalize the hazards of youthful marriages." The age of the bridegroom is probably an important factor. Many of the studies indicate that the persons involved in these early marriages are emotionally unstable and would

probably have matrimonial difficulties at any age. But "for certain segments of the young population and their families, young marriage may be considered normal and desirable and receive considerable support. Many of the Nebraska couples had low educational and occupational aspirations, adhered to relatively traditional sex role and family relationship norms, generally did not perceive their sex relations in early marriage as a problem of major importance, and generally maintained close and frequent contact with their parents." Age *per se,* therefore, is not an adequate criterion for predicting successful marriage; though plenty of data give the early marriage bad prospects; thus Thomas P. Monahan found that "When both parties were 16 or younger at the time of marriage the divorce ratio was about four times that of the central area" which he considers to be made up of marriages involving husbands 20 to 26 years of age and wives 22 to 24 years of age. "Also, the 19 year old wives with husbands the same age or younger, or 19 year old wives with husbands 30 or older, showed 50% higher ratios than those 19 year old wives with husbands just a few years older than themselves."

Young husbands and wives themselves often express regret over their premature marriages: thus Dr. Burchinal has reported that among a sample of 60 high school girls who had been married on the average for about six months, 55 expressed regret over their decision to marry before the completion of high school. This was particularly true of those who were pregnant premaritally.

"On the basis of present knowledge," Dr. Burchinal agrees, "family life specialists are safe in generalizing that young marriages involve greater risks than persons who are 19 years of age or older."

This comprehensive review of the subject includes citation and analysis of 39 previous contributions. It should be seen by everyone interested in the strengthening of family life. Apparently the material will also be published in the workbook of the church conference in May. Dr. Burchinal concludes with a consideration of the implications of early marriage for family life educators. Stated very briefly:

1. "Current concern about young marriage provides a powerful basis for defending existing marriage and family life education programs and for proposing their expansion."

2. "Young marriage should also be a stimulus for encouraging the development of programs for general counseling and specifically of pre and postmarital counseling."

3. More attention should be paid to state laws, especially those which make marriage too easy with "no questions asked."

4. The community, and educators especially, must assume the responsibility for helping everyone to prepare more successfully on a very broad basis, for the marriage into which nearly all of them will eventually enter.

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Educational Notes

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY has revised its interdivisional doctoral program in marriage and family living, after 10 years of experience and 20 completed doctorates. Participating departments are those of Home and

Family Life, Social Welfare, and Sociology, and the program offers opportunity for specialization in the following areas: marriage and/or family counseling, college teaching, research in marriage and family living, and family-life education for school and community. Full program may be had on application to the director of the program, Dr. F. Ivan Nye, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Fla.

ACCENT ON LIVING, is the name of a magazine written especially for people interested in handicapped children. Sample copy free on request to editor Raymond C. Cheever, 802 Reinthaler, Bloomington, Ills.

EVANSTON (ILLINOIS) HOSPITAL is establishing a genetics clinics and laboratory to be called the Fred Lyman Adair Genetics Unit. This will add one more to the small list of agencies prepared to offer competent counseling on problems of human heredity.

EARLY MARRIAGE is the title of a new educational film, in color, available from the E. C. Brown Trust, 220 SW Alder st., Portland 4, Ore. Prepared by Churchill-Wexler Film Productions, who were also responsible for the E. C. Brown Trust's two previous and popular films, *Human Growth* and *Human Heredity,* it runs about 25 min. and is intended for high schools.

NEW APPROACH to enlightening teen-agers about the venereal diseases is made in a full-length dramatic film called "V.D.", which should be released with the next few months and is intended to be shown commercially in general admission theaters throughout North America. It is described as primarily an entertainment film on boy-girl relationships.

Around the World

MARRIAGE COUNSELING center in Duesseldorf, Germany, directed by Dr. G. Groeger, is part of the Family Welfare Service of the Evangelical church. It includes a child guidance clinic and also a 24-hour telephone service for those in trouble.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION from a "donor" was emphatically disapproved by a British Parliamentary Committee set up two years ago to study and report on the subject. Chaired by the Earl of Feversham, the committee heard a great deal of testimony from all sorts of "experts" and interested persons and organizations. It opines that "having regard to the dangers and disadvantages for the child, the parents, the donor, and for society as a whole, A.I.D. is undesirable. We therefore wish to discourage the practice (which) we think most unwise and a grave injustice, (whether regarded as a real or only a potential danger,) to the child." Two of the nine members signed a dissenting note.

ENGLISH AUTHORITIES are complaining that London has become a Mecca for illegitimately-pregnant women. Last year 3,005 girls with a baby on the way but with no wedding ring, sought help from welfare organizations in London. Among them were 1,259 girls from abroad including 734 from Ireland, 320 from the West Indies, 141 from other European countries, and 64 from other overseas territories. "The girls flock to London to have their babies free and in secret, then most of them flee after dumping their unwanted children on adoption organizations," said one official. London's percentage of illegitimate births, 10.4, is more than twice the national average.

NEW BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

SEX IN MAN AND WOMAN: its emotional variations, by Theodor Reik. Pp. 249 (no index), price $4.50 from Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 101 Fifth ave., New York 3, N.Y., 1960.

One of the pioneer psychoanalysts here gives us a scrap-bag of reflections, observations, and comments on a subject of perennial interest and of great importance. Dr. Reik jotted down ideas as they came to him, added bits culled from wide reading, and when the desk drawer was filled, arranged them in loose groupings and sent them to the publisher. There are many minor inaccuracies, a few of them probably merely the "typographical errors" of the printer that are so easily blamed for a writer's own errors, but most of them indicating careless editing or too much reliance on memory. The book would be greatly improved by severe pruning. With all this, it is a valuable book, because it directs attention to the differing significance which most important problems of life have for the two sexes, and to the fact that in large and important areas of life men and women have different standards of value. They will behave differently in any situation, merely because they are male and female respectively. "Men in their crudities and women in their subtleties" are the subject of most of Dr. Reik's pages and he writes entertaingly, as always. Certainly no student will agree with everything that he writes, but a reading of the book should lead to further and very profitable study and observation.

MAKING THE LATER YEARS COUNT for a healthy, well-provided, blessed old age, by Austin J. App. Pp. 177, price $3.95 from Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee 1, Wis., 1960.

Dr. App has filled this book with facts, figures, and anecdotes which make for interesting and instructive reading, and he covers almost all of the subjects which should concern a Senior Citizen, ending with chapters entitled " Keeping an eye on the next world" and "A brave and Christian conclusion." He tells us that one of the distinctive features of the book is that it is written from a Roman Catholic point of view, and that there are only two other such books in print. But from any point of view it is one of the more useful contributions to the subject. The author is associate professor of English language and literature at La Salle College, Philadelphia.

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THE FUTURE OF MAN, by P. B. Medawar. Pp. 128 (no index), price $3 from Basic Books, 59 Fourth ave., New York 3, N.Y., 1960.

The title of this book is something of a misnomer since Dr. Medawar (Nobel prize winner and one of the ablest of the younger English biologists) announces at the outset that he does not propose to foretell the future but merely to describe the scientific methods by which the future might be foretold. He is therefore very cautious in stating any outright conclusions. He thinks there is good evidence that the average intelligence is declining, in civilized countries, because of inequal-

ities of the birth rate; but he believes that the trend of evolution would stop this decline before it became complete. Any reader with enough background and determination to follow the author's close reasoning, much of it quite technical, will be richly rewarded by a better understanding of the extremely important and interesting subject of the evolution of man. Dr. Medawar is professor of zoology at the University of London.

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AND THE POOR GET CHILDREN, by Lee Rainwater. Pp. 202, price $3.95 from Quadrangle Books, 119 W. Lake st., Chicago 1, Ill., 1960.

The old idea that "The rich get richer but the poor get children" has to be qualified heavily to bear any approximation to a general truth; but the problems of "the working class" are certainly somewhat different from those of the leisure class, and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America therefore sponsored the research described in this book. Sociologist Rainwater interviewed 46 men and 50 women in Chicago and Cincinnati, trying to get a fair sample of the working class married couples and to acquire information about their sexual relations, family planning, and use of contraceptive methods. The findings, presented interestingly in detail, bear out other surveys: It is popularly supposed that lower class girls are brought up with great freedom, that they learn early in life all that is to be known about sex, and that in marriage they have no inhibitions. None of these suppositions is correct, in the group here studied. Dr. Rainwater concludes that the lack of effective contraception so common in this group is not due simply to ignorance or misunderstanding but that it is embodied in particular personalities, world views, and ways of life which have consistency and stability and which do not readily admit such foreign elements as conscious planning and emotion-laden contraceptive practices. He discusses the lines along which an effective educational campaign should be planned, and thinks that "The condom will probably be the method chosen by most working class couples for a long time." Even when the much talked about "pill" is perfected, these wives would not use it. The author of this eminently readable book is associate director of Social Research, Inc., in Chicago and was assisted in the work by Karol Kane Weinstein.

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THE OUTDOOR-INDOOR FUN BOOK, by June Johnson. Pp. 210, price $3.95 from Harper & Bros., 49 E. 33rd st., New York 16, N.Y., 1961.

A treasury of every-day games, family and group activities, party and holiday ideas for children from six to 12. A useful feature is the lists of organizations and publishers from which further information may be had. Mrs. Johnson is the author of other books in this field including the popular *"838 ways to amuse a child."*

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PAUL AND MARY, by Bruno Bettelheim. Pp. 445, paper covers, price $1.45 from Doubleday &Co., Garden City, New York, 1961.

Dr. Bettelheim is professor of education at the University of Chicago, and director of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School there. This book tells the story of the prolonged coun-

seling and re-education given to two "truants from Life," each of whom was certainly a very difficult subject. Paul is described as "a case of institutionalism," while Mary was schizophrenic. The stories should interest both professionals and parents. One of the lessons which the latter must learn, Dr. Bettelheim says, is not to use fear as a means of educating or disciplining their children.

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THE CLINICAL USE OF THE REVISED BENDER-GESTALT TEST, by Max L. Hutt and Gerald J. Briskin. Pp. 168, price $5 from Grune & Stratton, 381 Fourth ave., New York 16, N.Y., 1960.

The test discussed in this book was devised by psychiatrist Lauretta Bender nearly a quarter of a century ago, and Dr. Hutt (now with the psychology department of the University of Michigan) began a few years later to score it as a projective test. Others have found it to be widely useful, and this book gives full instructions and interpretations, which will naturally interest only the professionals.

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CASEWORK PAPERS, 1960, from the National Conference on Social Welfare. Pp. 154, paper covers, no index, price $2.50 from Family Service Assn. of America, 215 Park ave. South, New York 3, N.Y., 1960.

Here are 13 papers on practical and important subjects that should interest almost every citizen. Marcel Heiman points out that the largest proportion of illegitimate pregnancies is among adolescent girls (15 to 19 years of age); and declares that the family, not the girl, is mainly to blame, especially through lack of discipline; that treatment should be directed toward the whole family even more than to the girl herself, and that prevention must depend likewise on strengthening family life. "Alcoholism is a family illness," says Gladys M. Price, illustrating it with her own treatment of a case. Samuel Mencher insists that authority is a constructive factor in all social case work. Frances H. Scherz talks about strengthening the parental role of adults with character disorders, —an extremely serious problem in connection with juvenile delinquency and from many other points of view. She finds that joint and multiple interviews are useful. Irwin Deutscher criticizes constructively much of the current research on juvenile delinquency. A common error, Abraham G. Novick declares, is to interpret all juvenile delinquency in terms of the male, when in fact the dynamics of girls' behavior are so very different from those of boys' behavior. He gives an interesting account of the ways girls in an institution build up make-believe families among themselves.

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ANXIETY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN, by Seymour B. Sarason et al. Pp. 351, price not stated, from John Wiley & Sons, 440 Park ave. South, New York 16, N.Y., 1960.

What are the attitudes of children toward tests? What effect do these attitudes have on their test performances? These practical questions have been studied for some years by a group of five psychologists at Yale University, who report the conclusions in this volume. They found that many children fail to do as well as they should, because of anxiety about the testing process; they produced in-

teresting scales to measure anxiety; and they believe teachers need much better training to recognize psychological problems, adapt their techniques to the peculiarities of different children, and establish an atmosphere in the classroom which facilitates learning. Their ultimate objeective is to find ways in which the school can help each child to do the best of which he is capable. At present, many children do not do their best.

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PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL ENCOUNTER, by Gordon W. Allport. Pp. 386, price $7.50 from Beacon Press, 25 Beacon st., Boston 8, Mass., 1960.

Dr. Allport, who has taught psychology at Harvard University for nearly two score years, was recently cited, in a poll of practicing clinical psychologists, as second only to Freud in influencing their practice. This volume brings together a score of his essays, many of them dating back 10 or 15 years. Anyone interested in human behavior will find them a rich source of information and stimulation.

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THE QUESTION OF FERTILITY, by Georges Valensin. Pp. 296 (no index), price $4.50 from Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1960.

Artificial insemination is the general subject of this book, translated from the French of an author about whom virtually no information is given. It also contains an immense amount of material bearing on fertility in general, reproduction, and sexual intercourse. The author has read widely but not very discriminatingly and offers only vague citation of authorities; a month of hard work would be required to check up on all of his quotations, many of which are not convincing—in fact, one of the many objections to the book is the juxtaposition of the results of scientific research with "old wives' tales" with apparently no intention of discriminating between them. Dr. Eustace Chesser, in a brief introduction, certainly makes an understatement when he comments that "Many statements are presented as facts, which would have been better expressed as theories or speculations." The book is marred by the continual insertion of verbal leers, insinuations, and snickers more appropriate to a night-club monologist than to a work of science, — even of Popular Science. If all these were in the French original, the translator might well have put them into more appropriate language. While the book contains much of interest, it is on the whole very unsatisfactory.

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Inexpensive Pamphlets

CHANGING CULTURAL CONCEPTS IN WOMEN'S LIVES, by Ruth Hill Useem. Pp. 6, single copy free on request to Commission on the Education of Women of the American Council on Education, 1785 Massachusetts ave., NW., Washington 6, D.C.

PARENT EDUCATION AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, Children's Bureau Publication No. 379, price 25c from Supt. of Documents, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C.

YOUR CHILD — TODAY, Pp. 312, price 35c from Education Dept., Pocketbooks Inc., 630 Fifth ave., New York 20, N.Y.

YOU, YOUR CHILD, AND EPILEPSY, by John Nardini, free on request to Federal Assn. for Epilepsy, 1729 F st., NW., Washington 6, D.C.

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